

# COFA Veterans Review Act (H.R. 2916)

## BACKGROUND

Citizens of the Freely Associated States (FAS), comprised of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau, have honorably served in the U.S. Armed Forces in nearly every major conflict and war over the past 50 years. After serving, FAS citizens can reside throughout the U.S., however many choose to return home. Although FAS veterans have earned healthcare benefits, they are unable to access these benefits when returning to their home country due to burdensome restrictions under the Veterans Affairs (VA) Foreign Medical Program. Currently FAS veterans must pay out of pocket for long-distance travel to Hawaii or Guam to utilize their earned healthcare benefits. As a result of the significant time, resources, and high costs for travel, many FAS veterans are never able to access VA healthcare services.

## ENSURING VETERANS HAVE ACCESS TO EARNED BENEFITS

It is vital the U.S. upholds its commitment to take care of our veterans. For over a decade the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense, Interior, and Health and Human Services have convened summits, developed reports, established task forces and advisory groups focusing on assessment of health care needs in the U.S. affiliated insular areas. Yet, FAS veterans continue to face significant hardship and access barriers to receive the care they need.

## SUPPORT THE COFA VETERANS REVIEW ACT (H.R. 2916 / S. 1222)

The COFA Veterans Review Act ([H.R. 2916](#) / [S.1222](#)) was introduced in the House by Reps. Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI), Aumua Radewagen (R-AS), Ed Case (D-HI), Michael San Nicolas (D-GU), and Don Young (R-AK) and in the Senate by Sens. Brian Schatz (D-HI) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK). The legislation creates a path forward to providing FAS veterans with equal access to these earned healthcare benefits. This bill authorizes a three-year pilot program to provide hospital care and medical services to veterans living in the FAS. In addition to authorizing the necessary pilot program to extend healthcare services to FAS veterans, the COFA Veterans Review Act would:

- Conduct a broader feasibility and advisability study on whether a permanent VA facility should be established in the FAS;
- Implement programs such as telehealth, Project Echo education and training, primary and specialty care provided by travelling providers, and compensation and pension examinations;
- Update census data on the number of veterans living in the COFA countries, which would help to improve current data limitations; and
- Evaluate the data standards for patient medical record information and the electronic interchange of such information.

We ask that you cosponsor H.R. 2916 and uphold the U.S. commitment to care for all veterans who have served. It is our Nation's responsibility to take care of all veterans who served, regardless of their home residencies abroad.

*For additional information or to become a cosponsor of H.R. 2916, please contact Guido Weiss ([guido.weiss@mail.house.gov](mailto:guido.weiss@mail.house.gov)) in Rep. Gabbard's office or Jared Christel ([jared.christel@mail.house.gov](mailto:jared.christel@mail.house.gov)) in Rep. Radewagen's office*